Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

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janasamūhe-niḥsaṅgaḥ

Alone in the Crowd

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तवकथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

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Detached from Unwanted Association

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

There are two classes of intelligent men. One is intelligent in material activities for sense gratification, and the other is introspective and awake to the cultivation of self-realization. Activities of the introspective sage, or thoughtful man, are night for persons materially absorbed. Materialistic persons remain asleep in such a night due to their ignorance of self-realization. The introspective sage remains alert in the "night" of the materialistic men. The sage feels transcendental pleasure in the gradual advancement of spiritual culture, whereas the man in materialistic activities, being asleep to self-realization, dreams of varieties of sense pleasure, feeling sometimes happy and sometimes distressed in his sleeping condition. The introspective man is always indifferent to materialistic happiness and distress. He goes on with his self-realization activities undisturbed by material reactions. (Purport to *Bg.* 2.69)

Unkown photographer.

A Krishna conscious person well knows that everything belongs to Krishna, and thus he is always free from feelings of personal possession.

Cover: Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his associates dance in *kīrtana* in front of the temple in Jagannath Puri. Painting by Dhira Lalita Das

Unknown artist. Kishangarh, Rajasthan. ca. 1750.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu dances in ecstasy

As such, he has no hankering for anything on his own personal account. He knows how to accept things in favor of Krishna consciousness and how to reject things unfavorable to Krishna consciousness. He is always aloof from material things because he is always transcendental, and he is always alone, having nothing to do with persons not in Krishna consciousness. Therefore, a person in Krishna consciousness is the perfect yogi. (Purport to *Bg.* 6.10)

Naturally, when one is adapted to the spiritual way of life, he will not want to mix with materialistic men. That would go against his grain. One may test himself by seeing how far he is inclined to live in a solitary place, without unwanted association. (Purport to *Bg.* 13.11)

Such a detached person naturally prefers to live in a secluded place. (Purport to *Bg.* 18.51-53)

The Meaning of Nihsanga — Living in Solitude

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

Here are the Supreme Lord's own words from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* 11.12.1-2:

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

na rodhayati māṁ yogo na sāṅkhyaṁ dharma eva ca
na svādhyāyas tapas tyāgo neṣṭā-pūrtaṁ na dakṣiṇā

vratāni yajñaś chandāṁsi tīrthāni niyamā yamāḥ
yathāvarundhe sat-saṅgaḥ sarva-saṅgāpaho hi mām

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said, "My dear Uddhava, by associating with my pure devotees one can destroy one's attachment for

Painting by B. G. Sharma

Lord Vishnu appears before Dhruva Maharaja

Paintring by Amalnath Chakladar

The gopīs feeling separation from Sri Krishna

all objects of material sense gratification. The devotion developed in such purifying association brings me under the control of my devotee. One may perform the *aṣtanga-yoga* system, engage in philosophical analysis of the elements of material nature, practice non-violence and other ordinary principles of piety, chant the Vedas, perform penances, take to the renounced order of life, execute sacrificial performances and dig wells, plant trees and perform other public welfare activities, give in charity, carry out severe vows, worship the devas, chant confidential mantras, visit holy places or accept major and minor disciplinary injunctions, but even by performing all such activities one does not bring me under his control.

The purport is that none of these practices is as potent spiritually in attracting the mercy of the Supreme Lord as is *sādhu-saṅga*. The *aṣtanga-yoga* path and other such practices just mentioned please the Lord only superficially, unlike *sādhu-saṅga*, which pleases him fully. In another text, the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*, 8.51, this statement is found:

yasya yat-saṅgatiḥ puṁso maṇivat syāt sa tad-guṇaḥ
sva-kularddhyai tato dhīmān sva-yūthyān eva saṁśrayet

A person gradually acquires the characteristics of the company he keeps, much like a gemstone which lends some of its own color and sparkle to other substances in touch with it. Therefore, a person can become a pure devotee in the saintly association of pure devotees.

Sadhu-saṅga brings blessings to all the living entities. The scriptures advise *niḥsaṅga*, to live without companions. This means one should give up contact with worldly-minded people and only seek the saintly company of *vaiṣṇavas*. Even accidental association with pure devotees without knowledge of the benefit brings good fortune, as declared in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* 3.23.56:

saṅgo yaḥ saṁsṛter hetur asatsu vihito 'dhiyā
sa eva sādhuṣu kṛto niḥsaṅgatvāya kalpate

Desiring companionship for sense gratification is certainly the path to bondage. Yet, the same act of association with saintly persons leads to the path of liberation, even if performed without knowledge.

— Bhaktivinode Thakur. *Jaiva Dharma.* Chapter 17. Translated by Sarvabhavana Das. Published by Brhat Mrdanga Press. Vrindavan. 2003.

Paintring by Amit Sarkar

Krishna attracts the gopīs *with the sound of his flute*

Unknown artist. Tehri Garhwal series of Gita Govinda ca. 1775–80

The sorrow of Radha

Guru is not a Flatterer

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

In the spiritual sphere, truth is not decided by taking a vote of what the majority of people say, as they do in mundane political elections. They elect their leaders by taking the vote of the majority of people, "He's our leader. He's been elected!" This is not applicable in the spiritual sphere. Therefore, it is said *vox populi* is not always *vox dei*, meaning that the voice of the people is not always the voice of God.

We should not accept *vox populi* — what the majority of people say. That's not applicable in the spiritual sphere. People in the material sphere do it. That's not intelligent. That is foolishness. A conditioned soul has four defects. He has no correct vision — he is a blind person, *andha*. So many blind persons are electing another blind person as their leader. The blind leader is leading many blind persons. All of them will fall into a ditch.

In one country, as a welfare activity a king was digging a big pond for the citizens. The king thought, "I'll ask all the milkmen in my kingdom to put milk in this pond. Then the pond will be filled up with milk instead of water." He then gave such an order to all the milkmen in his country. One milkman thought, "Everyone will pour milk. So, if I pour water the king won't notice." One of his intimate friends understood what he was doing and thought, "I'll do the same thing, I'll pour water instead of milk." The word spread, and all the milkmen poured water instead of milk, so the pond was filled with water. This is *jana-mata* ("public opinion", or the "belief of the masses"). Accepting this *jana-mata,* what the majority of people say, is a great danger. People think, "If I accept *jana-mata* then I will become very popular as a great *sādhu*, great *ācārya*. All will come to me saying, "Yes, he is a very good *sādhu*. A very good guru! He does what is pleasing to us."

Those who want to be popular, think, "People want this thing. All right, let us do it. Then we'll be popular." But my Guru Maharaja said, "No compromise!" One who compromises is not guru. A flatterer is not guru. Envious persons don't want the number of expert persons to increase. A big animal is flattered by all small animals. A hog, a camel, an ass flatter them. Similarly, those who are like blind men they flatter a big blind man.

They don't want that the number of post-graduates should increase — that the number of expert persons should increase. They think, "No, then who will elect us as leader? If all will be fools then I'll be recognized

Painting by Kshitindranath Majumdar. 1891 to 1975.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu leaves home to take sannyāsa

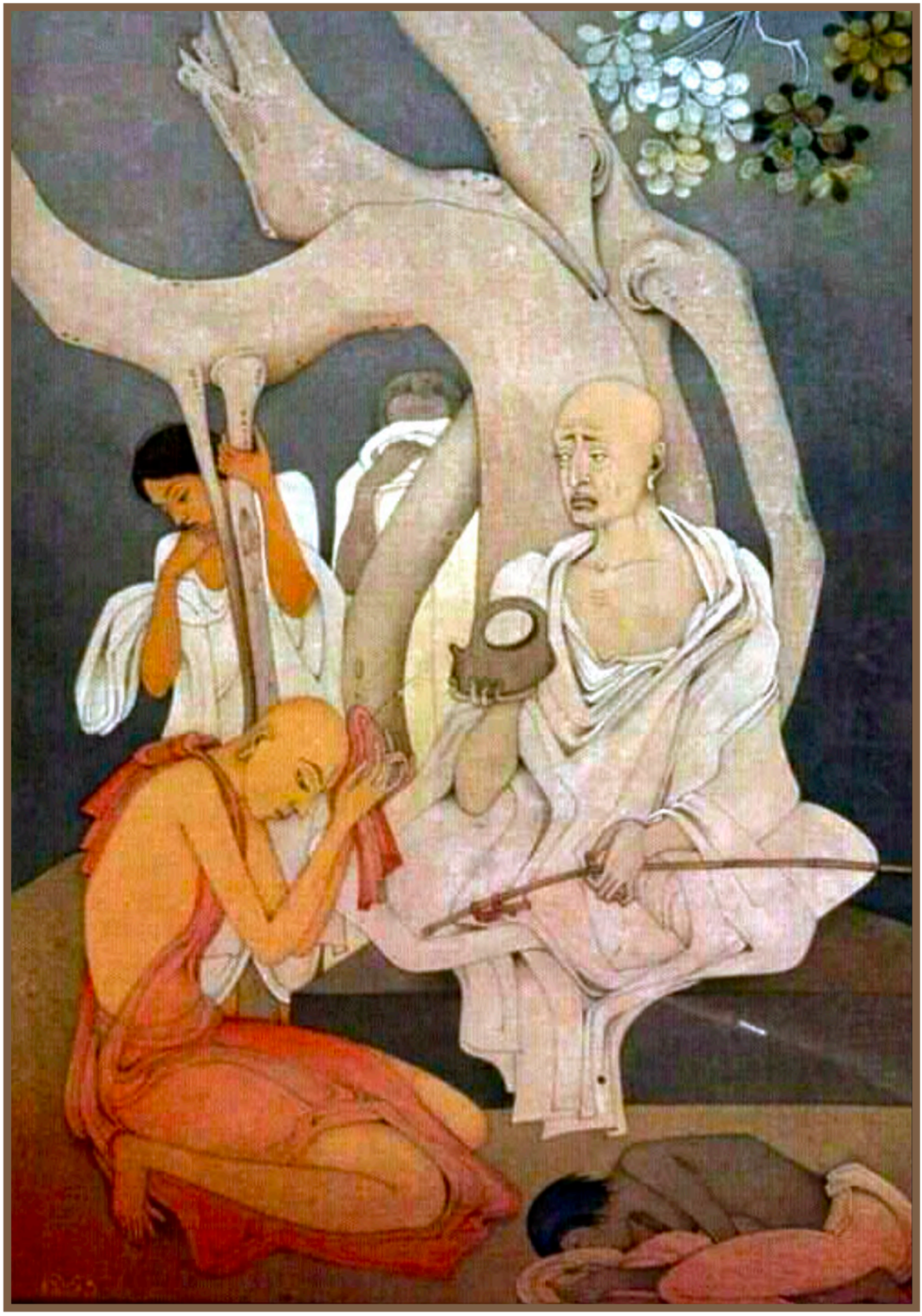
Unknown artist. Probably Rajasthani. ca. 1775–80

Krishna sits in a tree with the clothes of the Vraja gopīs

as a great expert person, leader. They will vote for me. I'll be popular."

Increasing the number of fools is not very wonderful. It is very easy. It is very easy to increase the number of those who are addicted to ganja, and intoxicants. Many such persons will say, "Here the ganja is very nice, drinking liquor is very nice." Big-big advertisements in the West are very strong. They tell everyone, "You eat meat." Naturally people want such a thing. "Twenty-four hours cold wine and liquor." It is very good. Then you'll become Indra. Thus we will be very popular government leaders, political leaders, by giving what the majority of people want. Then people will vote for us. But this is not applicable in the spiritual sphere. If you accept like this, then many votes will come in support of using these intoxicants, and many votes will come in support of falsehood. If there are two parties, one is in support of falsehood, and another is in support of truth, then truth will be defeated. Many will give vote to support falsehood, lying — this is very popular. Then cheaters will get votes, and an honest person will be defeated. Yet, truth should not be suppressed. Truth must come out. Many people will vote for falsehood. Now, the truth is defeated, and falsehood is victorious. But it will not go on forever. The time will come when the truth will come out. No one can suppress it, *satyaṁ eva jayate* — at last the truth will be victorious.

So, *jana-mata*, *vox populi,* is not applicable in the spiritual sphere. Those who do this are foolish. Ignorant fools. They are not really well-wishers.



Painting by Kshitindranath Majumdar. 1891 to 1975.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu takes sannyāsa *in Katwa from Keshava Bharati*

Painting by Kshitindranath Majumdar. 1891 to 1975.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu dances in ecstasy

We should not listen to those persons. We should not call for a doctor who'll only take money and fees and prescribe according to the dictation of the patient. He is not a doctor. If that is done, then it should be understood that a real doctor was not called for. He is a very cunning, greedy fellow, who only wants fees. He never thinks of the condition of the patient, how the patient will be cured.

"All right, we will worship such a guru, who will give us directions that are pleasing to us. We'll worship such a guru. We won't accept a guru who always disregards our opinion and acts like a dictator — whatever he says we have to obey. No, we won't do it." If someone thinks like that then it is rascaldom. Nothing else. Such a guru should not be called a guru or *ācārya.*

A four-year-old child will inquire what is *dāmpatya-prema*, what is conjugal love? If a seven-year-old boy says, "I want to understand the mellows and the pains of such affairs", then what will happen if you just give him what he wants? A patient wants, "Prescribe meat and palao for me." And the doctor thinks, "If I prescribe in this way what the patients desire, then I'll be a very popular doctor. I'll get much income." Yet, what will be consequence? What will be the condition of the patient?

He'll die.

So that persons is no doctor. Similarly, he is not a real guru who accepts what the majority of his followers want. If guru does that way, then what will be the consequence? There will be no spiritual advancement at all. Such a person is not *ācārya* or guru. So we should not listen to such things. My *guru-mahārāja* says there is no question of compromise. These people are abusing their minute independence and thereby cutting off their own legs with an axe. My *guru-mahārāja* has said, "One cannot dictate to the spiritual master, just as a patient cannot demand that his physician prescribe a certain type of medicine. This is the beginning of worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead — just follow the directions of the spiritual master — *guru mukha padma vākya cittete koriyā aikya, ār nā koriho mane āśā*. Don't think of anything else. Don't add any of your deliberation to the order of guru, what guru has ordered, what has come from guru.

Painting by Sree Indu Prakash Mukhopadhyay. Bengali. 1986

Krishna appears to the gopīs in their separation

Painting by Kshitindranath Majumdar. 1891 to 1975.

After his taking sannyāsa, *Sachi Mata sees her son at the house of Adwaita Acharya*

Always insisting, "Please, please, listen to me. This is my problem, this is my difficulty. I cannot do this thing. Please allow me to do this other thing." If one speaks like this to guru, then cheating gurus will think, "All right, if I do this, if I allow my disciple to do as they like, then I'll get many disciples, I'll be a very popular guru."

"Yes, what we want, that guru immediately gives us permission. Let us go to him. Don't go to that person who always denies, "No, no, no, you cannot do this." For example, Lord Shiva quickly becomes satisfied — "Whatever the worshiper wants, let it be granted." The demon Vrikasura worshiped Lord Shiva. His desire was, "If I put my hand on somebody's head that person will immediately be destroyed. Lord Shiva replied, "Let it be granted. Now *calo* — go!"

"If someone wants what he demands, give it to him quickly, then he'll go. Otherwise, that person will disturb me." Those who want to quickly become popular listen to what the majority of people say. But that is not guru. That is not doctor. There is no compromise. You should not dictate to the guru. What the guru says, you must obey. So many disciples try to dictate to the guru. "Please, please, please do this thing, please allow me to do this." What is this nonsense? You don't know what is good for you. You are a patient. Your digestive system is very bad.

Flatterers are not gurus. A true guru doesn't want such flatterers. Krishna is *suhṛdaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ* — your genuine well-wishing friend, and his dear devotees, *mahājanas, sadhus,* they are more merciful. They are also well-wishers of the suffering souls.

One should completely depend on the will of the Supreme Lord. Completely follow, as it is, the instruction given by a bonafide spiritual master! Don't twist it. Don't add any of your own deliberation. That will be good for your spiritual advancement. Otherwise, you'll suffer. You won't make any spiritual advancement. You'll glide down to hell and suffer there many, many lives.

— From a lecture in Bhubaneswar. 4 July 1992.

Painting by B. K. Mitra. 1884-1974. Gita Press Gorakhpur

The poet Jayadev Goswami leaves home

Vintage painting by an unknown artist. Circa early 1900s.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu leaves his wife Vishnupriya and takes sannyāsa

Unknown artist from a Sanskrit manuscript. 1670.

The battle between Arjuna and his guru Dronacharya

Closing Thoughts
Alone in the Crowd

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada wrote in his essay *Vaishnavism — Real and Apparent*:

> Oh mind! Thou art a servant of the *vaiṣṇavas* and thou shouldst always hope for attaining devotion. Why shouldst thou hanker after solitude? A false renouncer calls himself a forsaker — and can never be a *vaiṣṇava*, as he abandons his servitorship and drowns himself in solitude. What's the gain in acquiring that seeming good?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and his disciples such as Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada repeatedly urged devotees to abandon the desire to live in solitude. Yet how do we reconcile this with Krishna's seemingly contradictory instructions in the *Bhagavad-gītā*?

Therein Krishna suggests solitude on four occasions. In chapter 6, verse 10, he states: *rahasi sthitaḥ ekākī* — "A transcendentalist should live alone in a secluded place." In chapter 13, verse 11, while describing the symptoms of knowledge, he mentions *vivikta-deśa-sevitvam* — "Aspiring to live in a solitary place," and *aratir jana-saṁsadi* — "Not being attached to people in general." In chapter 18, verse 52, he again describes the qualities needed for self-realization: *vivikta-sevī* — "Living in a secluded place."

When considered carefully, these instructions are not necessarily contradictory. The act of living alone and the wide dissemination of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* are not mutually exclusive. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's pastimes in Jagannath Puri illustrate this harmony beautifully. In effect, Mahaprabhu established a spiritual university there — a model for how to engage in *bhajan*, receive *kṛṣṇa-prema*, and attain Vrindavan.

The first "classroom" is the Jagannath Mandir. The temple represents organized religion — a place of massive crowds and diverse moods, where even exalted devotees like Haridas Thakur, Rupa Goswami, and Sanatan Goswami faced exclusion. Yet, despite the politics, problems, and scandals inherent in such institutions, Mahaprabhu continued to attend. According to Srila Lochan Das Thakur in his *Caitanya-maṅgala*, Mahaprabhu visited the temple four times daily for *darshan* of Lord Jagannath. From this, we can conclude that however imperfect it may be, organized religion is upheld by the Lord himself for the benefit of conditioned souls.

The second "classroom" in Puri — very close to the temple — the Gambhira holds an entirely different purpose. Here, Mahaprabhu revealed the inner path, showing how to survive organized religion and achieve perfection in *bhajan*. The Gambhira is a place of intimacy, where his primary companions were Svarup Damodar and Ray Ramananda — incarnations of Srimati Radharani's closest confidantes Lalita and Vishakha *sakhīs*. With their help, Krishna as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu immersed himself in the esoteric mood of Radharani.

Thus, Mahaprabhu's Puri pastimes demonstrate that both public dissemination of *bhakti* and private relishment in *bhajan* are essential. He taught us the art of living alone in the crowd.

The pastimes of Srimati Radharani and of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and the activities of their devoted followers, share a common theme: intense

yearning and crying in separation from the Lord. Their loneliness — and even the loneliness of those sincerely seeking spiritual truth — is vastly different from ordinary emotional isolation. This deeper dimension of loneliness is explained in the following reflections from an anonymous quote widely misattributed to the author George Orwell. (Original source unknown):

> The most terrible loneliness is not the kind that comes from being alone, but the kind that comes from being misunderstood.
>
> It's the kind of loneliness that doesn't come from silence, but from the overwhelming noise of a world that doesn't truly hear you. You stand in a room full of people, laugh when it's expected, speak when the moment demands it, and yet, in your heart, you feel invisible. You feel like the truest parts of yourself — the raw, unpolished, and beautifully complex pieces of who you are — go unnoticed, misunderstood, or even ignored.
>
> This is a different kind of ache, one that lives deep in the soul. ... To be misunderstood is to feel disconnected. It's like speaking a language no one around you understands, shouting your truth into the void, hoping someone will hear and respond. Instead, you're met with blank stares, polite nods, or worse, a misinterpretation of who you are. The world seems to focus only on the surface, skimming over your depths, while you yearn for someone to dive in and swim beside you.
>
> ... The truest ache of loneliness isn't about being alone; it's about feeling unseen.
>
> And yet, in this deep loneliness, there is strength. The resilience of holding onto your authenticity, even when it feels invisible to others. The quiet courage of refusing to fade into the expectations of the crowd. You may feel unseen, but the essence of who you are — the light, the fire, the complexity — is still alive. It waits, patiently, for the right people, the ones who will see you clearly and cherish all that you are.
>
> The beauty of being misunderstood is that it allows you to understand yourself. In the absence of connection, you learn to be your own anchor. You discover the importance of nurturing your own soul, celebrating your uniqueness, and staying true to your essence. And as you grow, as you embrace your full self, the world begins to shift.

In a paradoxical way, then, the existential loneliness of sincere spiritual seekers and the mission to spread *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* are deeply intertwined. Such inward-facing devotees may live among the bustle of modern life, yet remain untouched — like lotuses blooming in muddy water.

A poignant expression of this condition is found in a poetic translation by the Sri Vaishnava scholar A. K. Ramanujan of a song by Namalwar:

> Mumbling and prattling the many names,
> while onlookers say, "They're crazy!"
> Entering and not entering cities,
> standing still or swaying
> before a laughing world,
> they dance, they leap,
> undone by feeling.
> And the gods bow down
> before them.
>
> — MDas.

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